



State of West Virginia  
Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety

Sterling Lewis, Jr.  
State Fire Marshal

Joe Manchin III, Governor

Phone: (304) 558-2191  
Fax: (304) 558-2537

**STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE**

1207 Quarrier St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Charleston, WV 25301

**For Immediate Release**

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## Fireworks Safety

As the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday approaches, West Virginians are preparing to celebrate with cookouts, family reunions and other get-togethers. Unfortunately, these celebrations can quickly turn disastrous for families, especially when children and teenagers are injured, sometimes permanently, by so-called "safe and sane" fireworks.

Permissible under West Virginia law are items called "Novelties and Sparklers", which include "snakes" and "glow worms", smoke devices that produce white or colored smoke, trick noisemakers which include "party poppers", "string poppers", and "snappers" or "drop pops", and wire sparklers, as well as other sparkling devices which emit showers of sparks and sometimes a whistling or crackling effect when burning.

***BY STATE LAW, NONE OF THESE NOVELTIES, SPARKLERS AND SPARKLER DEVICES, IS TO BE SOLD TO ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 16.***

In West Virginia, the most dangerous types of fireworks **prohibited by law** include large reloadable shells, festival balls or shots, cherry bombs, aerial bombs (skyrockets, Roman candles), daygo bombs, M-80 salutes and firecrackers. Also banned are the mail-order kits designed to build fireworks.

***VIOLATION OF THE FIREWORKS LAW IS A CITABLE OFFENSE.***

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fireworks consistently cause more damage to property than all other outdoor fire causes combined for the Fourth of July (day) in the United States. *NFPA's 2008 report on fireworks states:*

- In 2006, 9,200 fireworks-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms.
- The trend in fireworks-related injuries has been mostly up since 1996.
- The highest injury rates were for children aged 10 to 14.

- In 2006, nine out of ten (90%) emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that Federal regulations permit consumers to use.
- Risk of fire death relative to time used shows fireworks as the riskiest consumer product.
- Although careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths nationally, the chances of someone dying in a fire caused by fireworks is three times greater than the corresponding risk when a cigarette is in use.
- **“Safe and sane” fireworks are neither.** Fireworks and sparklers are designed to explode or throw off showers of hot sparks. Temperatures may exceed 1200°F—hot enough to melt some metals.
- Burns are the leading cause of injury from fireworks, followed by lacerations and contusions, all primarily involving the fingers, hands, eyes, and facial area.

### ***How can you prevent fireworks injuries?***

The West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office advises that, by far, the safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend an outdoor public display put on by specially trained pyrotechnic professionals.

However, if you do choose to use the permitted sparklers and novelties, these safety tips should also be kept in mind:

- **USE SPARKLERS AND NOVELTIES ONLY WITH EXTREME CAUTION.** Older children should be closely supervised and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks at all.
- **NO RUNNING OR HORSEPLAY** should ever be permitted while using fireworks.
- **BEFORE USING ANY LEGAL FIREWORKS,** read and follow all warning instructions printed on the label.
- **LIGHT ALL ITEMS OUTSIDE** in a clear area away from houses, away from yard debris such as grass, brush, leaves, etc., and away from flammable materials (gasoline cans, newspapers, etc.).
- **ALWAYS KEEP A BUCKET OF WATER** nearby for emergencies and for pouring on items that fail to ignite.
- **NEVER TRY TO RELIGHT** or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water, then properly dispose of them.

- ALWAYS make sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- NEVER set off more than one item at a time.
- KEEP unused fireworks away from firing areas.
- NEVER EXPERIMENT with homemade fireworks.
- NEVER IGNITE FIREWORKS IN A CONTAINER, especially in a glass or metal container. Fireworks are more hazardous when confined.
- NEVER throw fireworks at another person.
- STORE fireworks in a cool, dry, secure place. Check instructions for special storage directions.
- NEVER TOUCH UNEXPLODED FIREWORKS, and make sure children understand never to touch them.

***The West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office wishes everyone a safe, happy summer season. But please remember: it's everyone's special responsibility to protect our young children and teenagers by ensuring their safety, especially when exposing them to amateur use of fireworks.***

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CONSUMER FIREWORKS SAFETY, YOU CAN VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:**

[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

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**This release submitted by:**

Carol Nolte, Deputy State Fire Marshal  
Public Education Division  
(304) 558-2191, Ext. 53223  
Email: [Carol.E.Nolte@wv.gov](mailto:Carol.E.Nolte@wv.gov)